

Message Text

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12

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-15 SR-02 ORM-03 RSR-01 /131 W

----- 060390

R 251230Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1434

INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

EDCONSUL DOUALA

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 2909

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PINS, CM, NG

SUBJECT: CAMEROON/NIGERIAN BORDER PROBLEM

REF: YAOUNDE 2539

1. NIGERIAN AOABASSAODR SADA HAS JUST RETURNED TO YAOUNDE AFTER THREE WEEKS ABSENCE DURING WHICH HE RETURNED TO LAGOS AND THEREUPON MADE AN ON THE SPOT INSPECTION OF THE SITUATION IN THE TROUBLED CAMEROON BORDER AREA (SOUTHERN NDIAN DEPARTMENT) TOUCHING ON NIGERIA (SEE REFTEL).
2. SADA TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT HE WENT BY BOAT FROM CALABAR TO THAT PART OF AREA IN CAMEROON WHICH HE COULD REACH WITHOUT GOING ONTO HIGH SEAS. TO COMPLETE PICTURE HE APPROACHED THE SOUTHERN PART OF AREA BY BOAT FROM VICTORIA (CAMEROON), AT TIMES USING CANOE AS ONLY MEANS OF SCANNING SOME SETTLEMENTS.
3. SADA INDICATED THAT BORDER WAS NOT THE ISSUE. PROBLEM WAS TO GET INTO HEADS OF NIGERIANS WHO HAVE LONG OCCUPIED VILLAGES ON COAST AND ON ISLANDS THAT THEY ARE NOW LIVING IN CAMEROON. MOST OF THEM HAVE LIVED IN AREA SINCE PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD WHEN
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WEST CAMEROON WAS ADMINISTERED AS PART OF NIGERIA, AND INDEPEND-

ENCE HAS BROUGHT LITTLE CHANGE IN THEIR LIVES. THEY ARE VERY SIMPLE PEOPLE, EARNING THEIR LIVELIHOOD FROM FISHING. ALL OF THEIR TRADE IS WITH NIGERIA AND ONLY NIGERIAN MONEY IS USED IN THEIR MARKETS. THEY OUTFIT THEIR BOATS IN AND OBTAIN THEIR CREDITS FROM NIGERIA. CAMEROON PRESENCE IN MOST OF AREA IS VIRTUALLY NONEXISTENT, APART FROM A DISTANT SUB-PREFECTURE AND A VERY SMALL NAVAL DETACHMENT ON AN ISLAND WHOSE NAME I DID NOT GET.

4. THE RECENT UNREST IN AREA WAS PRECIPITATED BY A VISIT OF CAMEROONIAN AUTHORITIES CHECKING PAPERS OF LOCAL INHABITANTS. THOSE WHO DID NOT HAVE PAPERS AT HAND WERE TOLD TO PRODUCE THEM FOLLOWING DAY OR "SUFFER CONSEQUENCES," WHICH THEY INTERPRETED (ON BASIS EXPERIENCE) AS FORETELLING ROUGH TREATMENT. THEY THEREUPON FLED THEIR VILLAGES FOR NIGERIA. SADA STATED THAT 11,000 OF THEM DISAPPEARED VIRTUALLY OVERNIGHT.

5. NIGERIAN AND CAMEROON GOVERNMENTS HAVE BEEN DEFUSING THE ISSUE AND ARE ENCOURAGING NIGERIANS TO RETURN TO AREA. SADA SEEMS CONFIDENT THAT DESIRE OF TWO COUNTRIES FOR CONTINUED GOOD RELATIONS PROVIDES ASSURANCES THAT GURC WILL LEAVE THEM IN RELATIVE PEACE.

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